



# IOWAccess Project Concept Paper

---

1. **Email completed copy to the IOWAccess Manager: [malcolm.huston@iowa.gov](mailto:malcolm.huston@iowa.gov) .**
  2. **Send signed hard copy to Malcolm Huston, IOWAccess Manager, DAS-ITE, Hoover B Level, Des Moines, IA, 50319-0150.**
  3. **Contact ITE or vendor to prepare for project.**
- 

**Date** March 3, 2010

**Project Name** College Student Aid Portal - Administrative Web Application and Enhancements

**Requesting Agency** College Student Aid Commission (Iowa College Aid)

**Is this project in support of a program designated as an Iowa Great Place, pursuant to section 303.3c?** No

**Project Point(s)-of-Contact (*include name and phone number*)**

Julie Ntem (CSAC PM) (515) 725-3462  
Julie Leeper (presenter)

**Project Sponsor (*include name and phone number*)**

Karen Misjak (515) 725-3410

## **Business Case Justification**

In 2009 the College Student Aid Commission implemented the "I Have A Plan Iowa" web portal, providing a one-stop shop for career exploration, high school and college planning, financial aid resources, and Iowa employment opportunities for Iowa citizens in every stage of their lives.

In January 2010, the web based "Iowa Financial Aid Wizard and Application" was developed and incorporated into the "I Have A Plan Iowa" web portal to increase access and improve the process of finding and applying for financial aid for students and families of Iowa. Due to schedule pressures, a decision was made in late October 2009 to move the work from the vendor and engage ITE to develop the "Iowa Financial Aid Wizard and Application" web application to ensure a January 2010 production date. Some of the IOWAccess funds allocated for some capabilities were used to fund ITE's effort and the scope of the project was reduced.

I Have A Plan Iowa:

<https://secure.ihaveaplaniowa.gov/default.aspx>

Iowa Financial Aid Wizard and Application:

<https://apps.iowacollegeaid.gov/common/default.aspx?cmd=wizInfoView>

To continue plans to improve service for students, high school administrators, colleges, and universities, Iowa College Aid proposes a new project to include the creation of an administrative web application that consolidates the current 9 plus administration

applications into one, easy to use, dynamic application, with one consistent source of data. Although this work was to be included in the previous project, the need to move project work from the vendor to ITE prevented this development due to limited timeframes and budget. Iowa College Aid works with financial aid administrators at nearly 60 Iowa colleges and universities and counselors at all high schools in Iowa and processes nearly 140,000 college aid applications each year. These administrators need up-to-date, accurate information to ensure that they are providing complete and accurate award information to students and their families. In addition, financial aid administrators must provide individual student information to Iowa College Aid, which is currently accessed by these administrators through multiple administrative web applications and housed in numerous separate databases.

Although the application process for students has been enhanced, vital components in the "Iowa Financial Aid Wizard and Application" are still needed to enhance and complete the student application process. Student data still needs to be gathered into one area. This will allow data to be reported back to students, counselors, aid administrators, and other parties of interest. This will also give students a comprehensive view and measurement of their progress in the "I Have A Plan Iowa" web portal tools, such as high school, college, and career planning.

Additional critical enhancements to the "Iowa Financial Aid Wizard and Application" are also proposed. The early financial aid estimation enhancement allows students and their families to estimate financial aid that might be available to assist them in financing a college education. This capability is critical to improving the goal and attitude of college affordability by the public. Other enhancements that rely on consolidated student, such as the renewal aid application capability, will provide better service and capabilities for students.

The "I Have A Plan Iowa" web portal gathers individual student data through several tools that are incorporated into the portal. Future projects of the web portal will bring new services and tools which will also collect student data. An obstacle to providing these future services, such as financial literacy education, is the need to have data that currently exists in multiple locations consolidated into a single source.

Project costs so far for the "I Have A Plan Iowa" web portal are \$1,520,500. IOWAccess has funded \$536,000. Iowa College Aid has provided \$984,000, with \$360,000 going towards the ITE web portal efforts and \$624,500 from other grant sources toward vendor costs.

## **Expected Results in this Project**

The following high-level expected results are:

- Improve service for students, high school administrators, colleges, and universities
- Improve reporting capabilities to students, college and university administrators, and elected officials
- Replace outdated systems
- Improve efficiencies at Iowa high schools, colleges, and universities

## **Recipients of this Service**

- Students and families
- Financial aid administrators at nearly 60 colleges and universities in Iowa
- Iowa high school counselors
- All citizens of Iowa
- Elected officials

**This funding request is for the "Analysis Phase" of the CSAC - Administrative Web Application and Enhancements Project.**

**Project Timeline**

<b><i>Phase</i></b>	<b><i>Start Month/Year</i></b>	<b><i>End Month/Year</i></b>	<b><i>Estimated Amount</i></b>
<b>Scope Analysis</b>	April 1, 2010	June 30, 2010	\$30,000
<b>Design</b>	July 2010	TBD	TBD
<b>Implementation</b>	TBD	TBD	TBD

**Resources Being Contributed (*people or funds being contributed to the project by the sponsoring agency- include role/% of time or amount in dollars*)**

- Iowa College Aid will provide business personnel to assist in business analysis, requirements determination, design, and testing. Technical personnel will assist with database analysis and code deployment.

# IOWAccess Advisory Council Scoring Factors

Each IOWAccess Advisory Council member assigns a 1 to 10 point value on the following factors to your project proposal. These scores, plus your presentation before the Council and various discussion points, form the basis for the Council's decision on your proposal. Address each factor below:

## 1. Statutory requirement or other mandate

Is the project required by law or regulation, or is it needed to comply with state IT standards? Does the project fulfill a new mandate or is it required by existing law? Is it required by IT standards or necessary to interface with existing application?

- All Iowa colleges and universities whose students receive state funded financial aid administered by Iowa College Aid must report disbursements and changes in eligibility electronically through each corresponding reporting web application. These requirements are described in Iowa administrative rule for programs administered by Iowa College Aid.
- There are no state IT standards impacting this project.

## 2. Other funding source(s)

What other funding sources have been investigated and what were the results? Have they been applied for? What is available? Have transaction or other customer fees been considered? Is there a return to the IOWAccess Revolving Fund through transaction fees? Highest ranking for seeking/receiving outside funding.

- There are no transaction fees that may be obtained.
- Iowa College Aid may have access to funds available from the federal government through grant funding. However, Iowa College Aid is awaiting Congressional action on legislation that would ensure those funding sources are available. Grant funding will be awarded based on competitive bid processes.

## 3. Improved citizen access to government information

How is citizen access to government enhanced? Greater convenience? Better reliability? Proportion of manual/in person effort being replaced/eliminated? Faster response time? Easier to use? More secure? The greater the degree of citizen access to information, the more points.

- This project will:
  - Improve student and family views of college access and affordability by adding an early financial aid estimation component.
  - Provide greater convenience by providing pre-populated renewal financial aid applications.

- Refine eligibility for students going through the state financial aid process by eliminating programs in which the applicant will not qualify.
- Provide Iowa students, high school counselors, and college and university aid administrators with one simple tool to view award history and report updated information to Iowa College Aid.
- Increase efficiency in data collection and communication, and streamline information sharing among Iowa students, colleges and universities, and Iowa College Aid.
- Eliminate duplicate and inconsistent student information.
- Improve administrative application security at Iowa high schools, colleges, and universities.
- Help enhance government services by setting the stage to incorporate future tools for Iowans such as, financial literacy and default prevention.

#### 4. Impact on citizens or the business they conduct with the governmental entity

What segment of the citizen population is affected? Is this just a select group or the public as a whole? How does the proposed solution meet an identified need vs. a "nice to have"? Is the primary beneficiary the citizen vs. does this enhance the entity's ability to serve the citizen? Highest ranking for most citizens served.

- Students and their families:
  - The proposed early financial aid estimation component will help with the goal of improving the attitude of Iowa youth toward being able to afford and attend college. This will help encourage youth to apply themselves more in high school and will increase the number of college attendees.
  - A consolidated administrative web application will now provide Iowa students and their families with a simple tool to view award history. It will consolidate their individual student information which is now contained in 9 different locations.
  - The process of applying for aid will be more efficient for students, as individual eligibility criteria will be taken into consideration through the application process.
- Iowa high school, college, and university administrators:
  - This new administrative web application will provide necessary means for high school, college, and university administrators to report state aid recipients. High school, college, and university administrators will be able to view information about the students, student awards and report awards to Iowa College Aid in one web application. The functionality provided by this web application will enhance productivity at high schools, colleges, and universities ensuring better service and information to students and families. This consolidated application will also increase accuracy of student information and reduce duplicate entry of the same information and rework.

- Elected officials:
  - The consolidated administrative web application will allow Iowa College Aid to provide more information to elected officials so they can make better decisions about the state student financial aid programs.
- College Student Aid Commission:
  - The implementation of this application will allow Iowa College Aid to provide enhanced services to students and their families applying for funds as well as high schools, colleges, and universities receiving and reporting the funds.
  - The time saving will allow Iowa College Aid to improve processes for managing funds received by colleges and universities; improve customer service for student applicants, colleges and universities, and provide quicker turnaround.

## 5. Enhanced access to government information/ greater interactivity

How does the project enhance citizen one-stop electronic access to government information and transactions or allow for greater interactivity? The most points for "beneficial" use of IT to revamp business processes. Highest for total replacement. Average if adds new dimension to existing service.

- One-Stop Electronic Access:
  - To improve customer service for high schools, colleges, and universities, the new administrative web application, that consolidates the 9 plus current administration applications and databases, will be more convenient to use. Today high school and college and university administrators update and report financial aid awards through several separate administrative applications – one for each financial aid program, and the student and award information related to each program is stored in its own database.
  - Provide Iowa students with a new simple tool to view college financial aid awards.
  - Increase efficiency in data collection and communication, and streamline information sharing among Iowa students, high schools, colleges and universities, and Iowa College Aid.
- Use of IT to revamp business processes
  - Improves and increases the State's competency for using open source integration by building a State Financial Aid Administrative Web Application that will integrate with several other, different applications.
  - The financial aid application process will be simplified for Iowa students, high schools, colleges, and universities by providing an easier to use and more convenient application.

## 6. Collaboration

Does your project provide an opportunity for another governmental entity to share the resources or benefits? Can your project be used by another entity? The most points for projects benefiting multiple governmental entities or encouraging collaboration between entities. (May be demonstrated by letters of commitment from other entities.)

- All Iowa high schools, colleges, and universities will have access to student award information in one location.
- High schools, colleges, and universities will be able to improve their internal accountability for serving students and for managing the information and funding they receive from Iowa College Aid.
- Elected officials will have more information to make better decisions about the State Student Financial Aid programs.
- Iowa College Aid plans to demonstrate and promote the "I Have A Plan Iowa" portal and "Iowa Financial Aid Wizard and Application" to other state aid agencies at a national conference.

## 7. Chance for success

Describe why the project is well placed for success. Realistic timeline? Previous success rate? Sufficient support staff? Upper level management commitment? More points for projects with low technical and business risk and high chance of success.

- Iowa College Aid has been very successful implementing "I Have A Plan Iowa" in August 2009, and the "Iowa Financial Aid Wizard and Application" in January, 2010. This project removes the remaining data consolidation obstacle to providing future services, such as financial literacy.
- The financial aid application process will be simplified for Iowa students, high schools, colleges, and universities by providing an easy to use administrative web application to view award history.
- Maintenance and development of the current multiple ASP administrative applications is supported by a single part-time person. This adds risk for long term maintainability and ability to add enhancements in the future. ITE will develop and maintain the consolidated administrative web application and consolidated database, which will remove this risk.
- The ITE technical team has supported both the "I Have A Plan Iowa" and "Iowa Financial Aid Wizard and Application". ITE works well with the Iowa College Aid team and are partners with in meeting Iowa College Aid's strategic goals.

## 8. Estimated financial cost/benefit

Provide a rough calculation of costs vs. benefits. The higher the ratio of estimated benefit to the estimated cost, the more points.

- This funding request is for the "Analysis Phase" of the CSAC - Administrative Web Application and Enhancements. The Analysis Phase of this project will clarify the needs and possibilities, achievable goals and provide a plan of action, a schedule and cost estimates so the project can move forward.
- Anticipated cost-saving areas:
  - High school, college, and university administrators' time savings due to one administrative application versus 9.
  - Students' time savings to complete renewal applications with pre-populated fields versus entering all required information.
  - Provide Iowa students with a new simple tool to view award history.
- The time saving will allow Iowa College Aid to:
  - Improve processes for managing funds received by colleges and universities.
  - Improve customer service to student applicants, high schools, colleges, and universities.
  - Provide quicker turnaround of new aid applications and aid application updates as compared to the use of the current 9 applications.
- Currently there is only part-time person with knowledge to maintain the multiple ASP applications which introduces risk for the long term maintainability for the software. With ITE developing the new consolidated administrative web application and databases, the knowledge and maintenance will be transferred to ITE resources.

## 9. Transparency

How does the project enhance open and transparent government for citizens? More points for project with high usability in allowing citizens to quickly reach information or services.

- Students and families will be able to estimate future financial aid eligibility to assist in determining college planning and affordability.
- Students and their families will be able to quickly view accurate individual information and history of state financial aid.
- Colleges and universities will enter information and review accurate information on state aid recipients in one administrative web application rather than 9 separate applications.

## 10. Efficiency

Why is this project the “best” solution for the need? Are there alternatives and if so, why are they inadequate? More points for project that replaces outdated/legacy system or localized information access.

- A web-based administrative application is the best solution to provide timely information about the state financial aid programs.
- A consolidated database is the best solution to squarely address the issues of data duplication and consistency by removing nearly all student data from the existing 9 Iowa College Aid systems and storing it in a single, centralized location.
  - This project guarantees data integrity and consistency throughout all the Iowa College Aid systems by storing the student's data in a single location. It prevents data for the same student in two or more Iowa College Aid programs from being out of sync and provides a single, authoritative source for student data.
- This project replaces 9 applications written in the older ASP technology with a single .NET application. The current applications have been coded in ASP, C++, VBScript, JavaScript and html using IIS 6.0 Secured Socket Layer (SSL/HTTPS) connected to a SQL database. The new application will be written in .NET and the consolidated database will use Microsoft SQL Server. More importantly, the new system will make developing web services around the Iowa College Aid enterprise much easier. Doing so will also allow Iowa College Aid to integrate with key partners like the Dept of Education, Workforce Development and Economic Development.
- Technological Direction Impact - Iowa College Aid’s direction is to increase Iowa College Aid application maintainability while improving citizen access. This project accomplishes both the objectives.
  - Improves efficiency through the use of technology to better serve Iowa College Aid customers
  - SOA Consistency - The programming elements are consistent with existing enterprise standards.
  - SOA Approach - The development of the new system is planned to be consistent with and use an SOA strategy.
  - Improved maintainability of the software
  - Strong platform and foundation for the next projects and future enhancements

# Acknowledgement of Conditions for Approval of IOWAccess Project

---

## Project Approval Conditions

IOWAccess Revolving Fund project approvals are based upon the application materials submitted to the IOWAccess Advisory Council and approved by the Director of DAS. Recipients of IOWAccess projects are subject to the following conditions.

- The Iowa Accountable Government Act, Iowa Code Chapter 8E
- Information technology standards and practices that are applicable to “participating agencies”, the Office of the Governor, and elective constitutional or statutory officers pursuant to Iowa Code Section 8A.206.
- Iowa Administrative Code Section 11-25(8A) - Information Technology Operational Standards.
- Policies and procedures of the IOWAccess Advisory Council and DAS as outlined in this acknowledgement or published on their websites.

## IOWAccess Project Policy Guides

The acceptance of an IOWAccess Project is based on the following:

- Sponsoring agency is responsible for the efficient and effective administration of IOWAccess Projects through the application of sound management practices.
- The IOWAccess Project Process is guidance only and describes a customary sequence used in software development. As such, sponsoring agencies are not required to conform to the IOWAccess Project Process.
- Sponsoring agency assumes responsibility for using IOWAccess funds in a manner consistent with program objectives and the terms and conditions of the IOWAccess Project.
- Sponsoring agency will commit appropriate resources in a timely manner to the project to prevent undue delay in project completion.
- Sponsoring agency will be responsible for compliance with audit requirements.
- Approval of one phase of an IOWAccess project does not mean that other phases will be approved. Each phase is subject to separate approval.

## Guidelines for Costs

### Allowable costs

---

To be allowable under IOWAccess Projects, costs must meet the following general criteria:

- Be necessary and reasonable for proper and efficient performance of IOWAccess Projects.
- Be authorized or not prohibited under State or local laws or regulations.

- ✓ Not be included as a cost or used to meet cost sharing or matching requirements of any other State or Federal Project in either the current or a prior period, except as specifically provided by State law or regulation.

## Reasonable costs

---

A cost is reasonable if, in its nature and amount, it does not exceed that which would be incurred by a prudent person under the circumstances prevailing at the time the decision was made to incur the cost. In determining the reasonableness of a cost, consideration shall be given to:

- Whether the cost is of a type generally recognized as ordinary and necessary for the operation of the sponsoring agency or performance under the IOWAccess Project.
- Market prices for comparable goods or services.

## Composition of Cost

Typical costs chargeable to IOWAccess Projects are:

- Cost of materials acquired, consumed, or expended specifically for the purpose of those Projects.
- Equipment and other capital expenditures detailed in the application and previously approved as part of the Project.

Amounts not recoverable as costs under one State or Federal Project may not be shifted to another State or Federal Project, unless specifically authorized by State or Federal legislation or regulation.

## Availability of Funds

DAS Finance processes the disbursement of all funds for IOWAccess Projects. Qualifying expenditures for goods and services obtained from other than DAS-ITE or Iowa Interactive, LLC, must be paid by the sponsor and submitted to DAS for reimbursement. In order to facilitate the timely processing of IOWAccess Project reimbursements, entities must use the following process:

- The request must be submitted by the sponsor in writing or through e-mail to the IOWAccess Manager.
- The request must include the following information:
  - ✓ Identification of the IOWAccess Project for which reimbursement is being sought,
  - ✓ The amount of reimbursement requested,
  - ✓ Period of time covered by request,
  - ✓ A comprehensive description of the items covered by the request, and
  - ✓ Copies of any supportive documentation (e.g. vendor invoices, documentation for completed work).
- The IOWAccess Manager will review the supporting financial information and evaluate it against the originally approved project.

- When satisfied that the request meets the stated requirements, the IOWAccess Manager will recommend the request for approval for payment and submit it to DAS Finance for processing.
- In no case will the total reimbursement for each phase exceed the approved amount of the Project phase.

The sponsor seeking reimbursement of expenses is responsible for retaining all necessary documentation pertaining to the relevance and results of the work performed and will provide such documentation upon request. DAS Finance will refer the Auditor of State to the sponsor should there be any questions about the expenditures associated with the Project.

## Sponsor Monthly Status Reports

No later than the 21<sup>st</sup> day of each month the sponsoring agency shall submit a status report to the IOWAccess Manager if work is being performed by a developer *other than DAS-ITE or Iowa Interactive, LLC*. This status report should include:

- A short narrative of the accomplishments for the month.
- Descriptions of any changes in tasks, resources, or issues materially affecting the project plan and, if necessary, a schedule with new target dates provided.

## Changes to a Project

All changes to the Project, or the proposal that resulted in the Project, must be reviewed by the IOWAccess Advisory Council. The Sponsor must be prepared to appear before the IOWAccess Advisory Council to answer questions and provide any clarifications necessary prior to any action by the Council regarding a change to the Project. Reasons for requesting a change to the amount of the Project include, but are not limited to:

- Changes in the scope or objectives of the Project.
- Changes in the amount of project funding.
- Carryover of approved funding for a period of more than one year from the date of approval of the original funding.

All changes to a Project recommended by the IOWAccess Advisory Council must be subsequently approved by the Director of DAS.

## Project Disputes

Iowa Code 679A.19 DISPUTES BETWEEN GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES.

“Any litigation between administrative departments, commissions or boards of the state government is prohibited. All disputes between said governmental agencies shall be submitted to a board of arbitration of three members to be composed of two members to be appointed by the departments involved in the dispute and a third member to be appointed by the governor. The decision of the board shall be final.”

## Sponsor Acceptance

Signing below will signify that sponsor acknowledges and agrees to the IOWAccess project approval conditions as defined in this document.

_____ Sponsor Signature	_____ IOWAccess Manager Signature
_____ Date	_____ Date